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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 13, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM MURPHY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

MILITARY ENVIRONMENTAL EXEMPTIONS

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, while the headlines deal with the United States' struggle against terrorism and securing the peace in Iraq after the war, there is another less heralded battle, that is, for the world's environment, literally saving the planet.

When it comes to pure military might, the United States is unsurpassed. No one is even close. On the battle to save the planet, the prognosis is not quite so positive. Sea levels are

rising, glaciers are retreating, pollution around the world is on the rise, energy consumption by both the United States and the developing world is increasing, large swaths of forests continued to be devoured, the world's fisheries depleted, and coral reefs dying.

In the United States, on the environmental front, when not missing in action, is certainly not as aggressive in leadership as other developed countries in Europe and Japan. The world's greatest polluter and energy consumer is not accepting our responsibility in our capacity as the world's wealthiest and most powerful Nation.

Ironically, part of the solution is to be found with our Defense Department. The greatest source of pollution in the United States is associated with our military and the testing and development of weapons. The most serious and dangerous, of course, is the nuclear waste in various parts of the country. We have it in our Pacific Northwest. But there are sites large and small in every State of the Union, literally tens of millions of acres.

The United States has made a tremendous investment in training the finest fighting force in the world. We have made a huge financial outlay. A small portion of that outlay could be devoted to cleaning up after ourselves and protecting the environment.

Sadly, the House will soon be debating a proposal that is 180 degrees in the wrong direction. The Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Resources are looking at legislation that would completely exempt the Department of Defense from following environmental rules and regulations. It is wrong on so many different levels.

First of all, there is no need for the legislation. There has never been an example where a waiver that is able, under current law, to be authorized has ever been denied. There has never been an instance of military necessity for

training where a waiver has not been granted; not once.

The consequences of military activity occur in many unexpected ways: perchlorate pollution in lettuce in the Imperial Valley, polluted drinking water on Martha's Vineyard. Three times since I have been in Congress we have had to pull firefighters out of the woods because unexploded ordnance has been exploding around them. Exempting, exempting the military from commonsense environmental regulations that apply to the rest of America would put more of our service people at risk, put their families at risk, put their neighbors at risk of bad air, bad water, dangerous practices.

It also misses the real threat to military readiness: the notion of land use encroachment. The same sprawl and unplanned growth that threatens farm and forest land, pollutes our air and water, and congests our roadways is a real threat to our ability to train and maintain the world's mightiest fighting force. Failure to plan and manage these impacts is a serious, ongoing problem that is ignored by the pending legislation.

It is also wrong on the most fundamental level. It is missing an opportunity to use the Department of Defense to set the highest standards. My experience with our military personnel is that given the right resources, the right orders, they can achieve any mission. If part of their order is to protect the environment, to clean up from past mistakes, to set standards of environmental stewardship, they will hit a homerun every time. It would have a transformational effect for the world dealing with tragic debris, environmental carnage of past actions.

There is also a fundamental arrogance and hypocrisy that the Federal Government's rules and regulations are necessary to protect the environment. It will impose them on a small business or local government, but not on the

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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